

7 Strategies to Avoid Stretcher Tipping

TIPS FROM THE TRAINER by Tom Cox

Over the years, I think I've heard of every possible way of tipping an ambulance stretcher over – or at least I think I have! This generally happens because the crew isn't paying attention, or their sense of a "need for speed" overwhelms their better judgment.

While there certainly are times where seconds make the difference with a critical patient, if operators fail to focus on safety, the final outcome can be worse than the original emergency.

In preparation for writing this short article, I called my friend and former paramedic David Bradley, who now is an education specialist with VFIS, the largest provider of insurance, education, and consulting services to Emergency Service Organizations. His job is educating providers to increase their awareness of unsafe practices, which helps prevent unwanted outcomes.

Some of the more frequent improper stretcher uses he comes across are:

- Transporting patients when the cot is in the "loading" position and not in the rolling position.
- Not using patient restraints, as per manufacturer's guidelines.
- Not staying in contact (and thereby in control) of the stretcher.
- Allowing the stretcher to move laterally (sideways).
- Responders who allow the undercarriage to come in contact with obstacles.
- Incorrectly moving the stretcher over surface hazards.

Fortunately, there are steps you can take to minimize or eliminate the instance of stretcher tips:

- Read, train, learn, and follow manufacturer's user manuals.
- Have sound situational awareness.
- Always secure the patient with appropriate restraints.
- Roll the stretcher at a level not to exceed waist height (there may be times when you need to go lower, such as with larger patients or uneven surfaces).
- Roll the stretcher feet first.
- At least a minimum number of manufacturer-recommended responders be in contact with the stretcher at all times.
- Turn the stretcher in the direction of movement.

At this time of year, it's equally important to watch the weather for potential hazards. Ice and snow (and don't forget that dangerous "black ice") can be in the way, or, can build up on and around stretcher wheels. Always spend time planning and then clearing a path for your trip to and with the patient.

By thinking about these few, simple things, you'll be a safe operator!

http://www.fernoems.com/newsletter-january-2014/7-strategies-to-avoid-stretcher-tipping?ec_as=A6BB4DE53E10489384BF2FDF26B4437C